

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

1

Unit Six – Persuasive Writing

April/May

Overview

The Common Core State Standards call for a new focus on opinion writing. In the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which outline what students are expected to be able to do upon graduation from high school, the Common Core places the ability to write argument pieces first. Common Core authors devote time and space to explaining “The Special Place of Argument in the Standards,” citing research showing that the ability to write arguments is essential to success in college and the workforce (CCSS, Appendix A, p. 24). By the time your students graduate high school, the Common Core expects them to “write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence” (W 1). It may seem strange to be thinking about your students’ entering college when they have just started their school careers (!), but the Common Core expects that education is focused on that end result, so the steps to achieving it start now. Thus, this RWP unit lays the foundation for some of the work the Common Core considers essential to students’ academic and professional success.

In kindergarten, the expectations for opinion writing are that your students will compose opinion pieces and “tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about, and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book” (CCSS W K.1). Students are expected to do this work through using a “combination of drawing, dictating, and writing.” You may feel that your students can do more than this, and you will see that this unit *does* push students to exceed the expectations of the Common Core. At the same time, it is important to keep the standards in mind and to realize that we must make sure that our students meet these. We are free to teach beyond these, but we must hold students and ourselves accountable for meeting the standards. Thus, if students are expected to state an opinion, this means they must clearly understand a fact versus an opinion, and also understand how to give a clear opinion on a topic. It means they must know and use the term opinion. Next year, in first grade, they will be expected to supply reasons for their opinion, and to do this they will need to articulate an opinion that is persuasive and clear, work that begins now.

This unit of study is closely aligned with the forthcoming book, *Persuasive Writing of All Kinds* (Heinemann, 2013) from the series, *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum*. The book, and this write-up, reflect the Project’s latest thinking about kindergarten writing. This newly developed unit is exactly aligned to grade-level expectations and promotes raising the level of cognitive demand placed on students, in accordance with Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels. The work your students undertake in this unit will support them in meeting and exceeding grade-level expectations.

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

2

Assessment

Before you begin this unit of study, you will want to collect some data to support your planning. Over the past few months, students have been writing true stories, as well as how-to books and informational pieces. An on-demand writing assessment, prompting students to construct an opinion piece, will help you assess your students' grasp of this new genre, as well as pinpoint the most current needs of your writers. Your students have grown as writers over the last few months and you will want to see how the work they have been doing transfers to their work in persuasive writing. You may ask students to write a persuasive piece, using the prompt from the RWP's *Opinion Writing Continuum*, available to schools who work with the Project closely. You might give the prompt within the continuum, saying to your students, "Think of an idea or topic that you have strong feelings about. Write your opinion and give reasons that tell why you feel this way. Use everything you know about essay writing, letter writing, speeches, and reviews." If you feel that this prompt is not quite right for your kindergartners, know that we have had much this same concern. Ultimately, we decided that in order to create a true continuum which reflected pieces at multiple levels that could be compared, we needed to have the same prompt for all students at all grade levels. Of course, you may decide to adapt the prompt to best fit the needs of your particular students. You may decide, for example, to take out mention of essay writing. If you do adapt this prompt, we highly encourage you to plan how you will do this tailoring in conjunction with your grade team to ensure that you gather consistent data that you can compare across the grade.

Then you can compare the on-demand writing pieces with the exemplar pieces in the *Opinion Writing Continuum* and decide the approximate level of each writer in your class. You can also determine the next steps you'll make to support each writer. As always, you'll want your kindergarten writers to reach a level K on the Continuum to meet end-of-year expectations. At level K of the *Opinion Writing Continuum*, writers compose pieces that give an opinion or several opinions about a personal topic or a text, supported by some reasons that use information grounded predominantly in personal experience. By using this formative assessment to determine a child's level across this continuum, you can pinpoint what she is currently able to do and teach toward the expectations of the next level. You can also use this piece of writing as an assessment of where students are with their spelling and concepts of print. Refer to the Spelling and Print Concepts section at the end of the unit for more specific information about assessment and instruction in these areas.

Within the unit, you should rely on formative assessments, such as conferring notes from individual conferences and small group work as data-in-hand. Use this information to assess that students are on track and to teach into the things they are not yet grasping in order to support their progress.

After your students publish their final pieces of persuasive writing, you will once again ask the students to compose an on-demand piece of writing. This on-demand will serve as a summative

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

3

assessment, measuring growth across the unit. Are students writing with greater detail and incorporating strategies to persuade an audience, such as including supporting reasons? Is the piece more structured, starting with a clear statement of opinion? Are students now meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations?

Bend One – Words Are Like Magic Wands: They Can Make Things Happen

From the very start of this unit, you'll ask children to look at the world around them in new ways—seeing not just what *is*, but what could be. You'll teach them to reflect on the troubles they see and think, "What could make things better?" and then make all kinds of writing to help make a change. You'll offer students a menu of possibilities for the writing they'll do during this first part of the unit. Perhaps they'll design signs or posters to catch people's attention quickly, telling them about the problem and what they wish would change. Maybe instead, some writers will make lists, naming all the ways the playground could be better, or making up some new rules for a sibling to follow. A child might decide to make a petition, asking every kid in the class to sign his name, agreeing to help get things done. This is not a time to assign what kids will make, but to offer a menu and urge them to consider even *more* ways they could write to make a change: a book, a song, a card, a letter... The choices are endless, but regardless of the genre, your kindergartners will use words (and pictures) to express what they want and create pieces to make it happen.

You'll want to recall the teaching you have already done this year, reminding students to carry those strategies into this new work. You'll coach students to continue planning across pages, sketching a picture and writing in the air to rehearse words they'll soon add. You'll also remind students of strategies you've previously taught about generating ideas, helping children transfer what they know to think of a topic for this new purpose. You might offer a tip such as, "Look around with your eyes *wide* open, even at the things right in front of you, or think of the things you know so well, you can see them in your mind. Then, think, 'How could it be better?'" You'll remind students to come up with topics again and again, urging them to fill their folders with all the hopes and dreams they have for the world.

Of course, as you move through this RWP unit, you will also be bolstering the work students are doing in the parallel content area study of their community and neighborhood. You'll be helping them take a good long look at their neighborhood and to notice more about it than they would have otherwise. Your work in the content areas will also provide students with more ideas about areas of the community that offer material for writing. They will realize that a community is more than just the school, and they can move to asking, "How could the neighborhood park be better? How could the neighborhood streets be safer?" Invite students to consider the wider community as needing change and charge them with making that change happen!

Across the first week, students will be churning out piece after piece, each of which perhaps seeming far from persuasive. Don't feel disheartened by the less than perfect opinion writing

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

4

your children might do. After all, this is the start of a brand new unit, and they are entitled to be beginners! Welcome and celebrate their approximations. Teach into what you see they need. You'll teach strategies to convince an audience, supporting your five-year-olds to channel the natural abilities children often have when it comes to persuasion into their writing. You will undoubtedly find that your children are able to exceed the expectations of the Common Core asking them to name topics and state preferences. For example, you might show students how it helps to give reasons when you want to convince someone to agree with you. One way children might do this is to think about a problem, then consider what might happen if nothing is done to solve it by coming up with consequences. You might tell children they can add an "or else..." to their writing to show what could happen. You might even show children how giving more than one example of what could happen is a way to show readers the importance of making a change. Expect your more novice writers to include such details in their drawings rather than the text at first, showing what might happen in a picture, then adding labels or speech bubbles to elaborate. Your more skilled writers will likely do the same, but then add these details to their sentences, too.

You may find at this point that your classroom is starting to resemble a laboratory with kids experimenting with all kinds of writing projects! Some writers will perhaps use paper choices in ways you hadn't intended, and other children will perhaps craft pieces that are still a little lackluster. There's no way you'll have the wherewithal to teach your five-year-olds how to craft perfect pieces in each of these genres, but you might decide to study some mentor texts with your class, engaging in close reading of excerpts from persuasive pieces written to encourage change. You might show students a letter, or a protest sign, or song lyrics to help your writers understand how these genres look and sound. Then, you'll prompt children to think, "What did this writer do that I could try in my writing?" As you involve writers in studying exemplars and applying what they notice to their own writing, you'll be placing a higher cognitive demand on your students, and moving them to work at higher levels of Webb's DOK.

In previous RWP units, you coached writers to revise, fixing up their pieces to clear up parts that might be confusing, making their words easier to read, checking for punctuation and adding more to their pieces. You'll remind writers to use these strategies again as they write, revising and editing every piece just a bit, before running off to start a brand new one. At the end of each bend in the unit, you'll provide students an opportunity to celebrate their very best work, fixing and fancying it up to share with an audience. You might think of this as a light way of publishing several times across a unit, rather than waiting for the very end.

In the spirit of celebration, you'll honor these first attempts at some important persuasive writing work, while teaching kindergartners about the big purpose of this work: convincing people to make the world better. You'll start your students off by asking them to determine their audience—who could help fix the problem? Once students have decided on the right audience for their pieces, you can help them plan for the best way to share their writing: making signs for

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

5

a hallway, reading an announcement on the school loudspeaker or on the bullhorn at recess, visiting classrooms to read a petition and asking for more signatures, sending a letter in the mail, and so on. The goal of this initial quick publishing is, first, to help your students understand that words can make a difference and, second, to communicate to them, "Yes, *your* words matter, too."

Bend Two – Sending Words Out into the World: Writing Letters to Make a Change

In the second part of this unit, you'll channel the work your students have been doing to solve the problems they see into the direction of letter writing. You might first involve your students in goal setting, helping them to create a student facing *Opinion Writing Continuum* and then assess their work to that point, creating goals for new work. You could have your students post these so that they will remember them and keep them in mind as they go about the next part of the unit.

For this next bend, you might decide to fashion your writing center into a post office nook, offering baskets of letter writing paper, envelopes, return address label and stamps. Perhaps, you'll also show writers how to sort mail intended for in-school delivery, letters to bring home, and letters to mail out into the world. You'll probably decide to ask parents to volunteer in any way possible, donating envelopes and stamps, making copies of original letters, or sending letters to recipients in the community. This will surely keep the initial buzz of the new unit going into this next bend. At the end of this bend, you'll again give students an opportunity to celebrate their work, and exercise real-world purposes of letter writing, perhaps with a class trip to the post office or to the nearest mailbox.

To start this bend, we at the RWP suggest you remind writers that when you want to make a change in the world, it helps to find people that can help. You'll ask writers to think, "Who could help me fix this problem? Who else might help?" Then, you'll teach them to compose many letters to lots of people, persuading these people to join the cause. You'll certainly have writers, too, who will decide to write different letters to solve lots of different problems, writing to make the world better in a variety of ways. The goal is not to rally for one particular change or another. Instead, your goal is to teach kindergartners that when you want something, you need to convince people to agree. One way to teach writers to do this is by studying a mentor letter, figuring out what the writer did to convince her reader. You'll invite your children to join you in this inquiry, inviting them to identify parts that are especially convincing—places that stand out, or that give them a strong feeling, or make them want to help, too. Then, you'll involve your students in composing a list as a class to name ways that letter writers can be really convincing. Inviting students to participate in such an inquiry raises expectations for the higher level thinking. Perhaps, you'll find that kids spot the way the writer included **lots** of reasons, or told a little story to give an example of the problem. Maybe, they'll notice how the writer used a voice that sounded as if she was talking right to the reader, making sure to be polite! Or, students might notice the craft the writer used, pointing out the capital letters, or the bold print or the different punctuation. Or they might notice that the writer has included possible solutions, adding ideas for

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

6

ways to fix the problem to spark a real change. Don't worry if your students don't uncover everything you had hoped. You'll have opportunities across the remainder of the bend to point out strategies that students didn't see on their own, making additions to the class list. You'll charge writers with transferring and applying what they have noticed to their own letters and provide more explicit instruction and modeling where your students need coaching.

To support planning and the voice of this genre, you'll ask students to imagine that the person to whom they are writing is standing right beside them, and to rehearse telling that person what they want to say, before writing those words down on their paper. You might even engage the class in some writing in the air, speaking in the voice of letters, to compose a class letter to fix a shared problem, perhaps to fix the closet door, or a flickering light bulb. In doing so, you'll be helping your young writers practice crafting thoughtful letters. You'll also be supporting important standards for Speaking and Listening, including participating in collaborative conversations; describing familiar things with prompting and support; and expressing thoughts feelings and ideas clearly. (CCSS SL K.1, SL K.4, SL, K.6),

Next, you might decide to teach your writers to transfer and apply to their writing the craft moves they have learned in other units. You might gather your writers and ask them to recall strategies they have learned to make words stand out and then ask them to go and try these. The more you place the responsibility on children to transfer and apply their learning rather than explicitly telling them what to apply and how, the more you raise the level of cognitive demand. As you watch and assess what your writers are transferring to new work, you can always teach into what you see them not applying—show them again how to use craft to make words stand out, the way they have in their true stories and how-to books, show them how to use big words or capital letters or make words bold, or show them how to include sound words to communicate with their readers. You'll also want to remind your writers that they should be considering their goals as they write.

Before the end of the week, you'll want to ask your writers to consider all the letters they've collected, deciding on the best one to send out into the world. Perhaps they'll think about which problem can't wait another moment, mailing that letter to someone who can help. However, you'll remind writers that soon these letters will be in the hands of their reader and it's important to make sure that they are easy to read! With this immediate real-world purpose, you'll ask kids to reflect on their writing, deciding on ways they might make them easier to read. As they ready their writing to go out in the world, you will want to continue helping students master grade-level expectations for language. As outlined in previous RWP units, there are four new expectations required of kindergartners in demonstrating a command of conventions of standard written English, in addition to expectations in grammar, usage, and spelling: "capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun, *I*" (CCSS L K.2a), "recognize and name end punctuation" (L K.2b), "write a letter or letters for most consonant and short-vowel sounds (phonemes)," (L K.2c), and "spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

7

relationships.” (L K.2d) See below for more specific guidance on supporting students in mastering language conventions.

Bend Three – Drafting, Rehearsing and Presenting Persuasive Writing Projects to Better the World

In this third, and final part of the unit, you’ll rally kids to join you in a whole-class pursuit, possibly around a more worldly cause, like protecting the planet. You’ll return to the different kinds of writing with which you launched the unit, asking writers to work on individual projects that convince others to “be green”! Students might use large poster boards to display this array of new writing, designing a collage of signs, songs, petitions, letters, lists, how-to books, and so on.

You’ll remind writers to recall everything they have learned about persuasive writing this month and apply these strategies when writing new pieces, too. While reminding your students to use all the strategies they know to make their writing more convincing, you’ll also teach writers ways to lift the level of their persuasive writing. You might teach children that it often helps to include information about the topic, teaching their reader why this cause is so important. You might also encourage students to interview friends, teachers, or other people in the school, to quote experts about the topic, or to add what other people in the world think. Your conferences and small group work can offer additional support to help students include reasons, examples, consequences or solutions when elaborating on their ideas. You might ask writers to look across their folder, rereading their pieces to make plans for the kind of writing they’ll do next. You’ll want to regularly reference the RWP *Opinion Writing Continuum* to track student progress against expectations, targeting your teaching to meet this range of ability.

Across this bend, like the others, you’ll expect that writers are drafting three to four pieces each week, drafting new pieces that work to solve the problems they see and convincing others to be more green, perhaps writing signs to remind people to turn off the lights, letters to convince the principal to install a rack for bikes and scooters, petitions for a school garden, or even a how-to book that teaches readers steps for separating recyclables.

Finally, you’ll want to offer your students multiple opportunities to meet with partners to share their writing out loud, rehearsing how they’ll presentations might go. You’ll teach students how speakers read using body language, facial expressions and gestures to show the big feelings they have about their topic. You might decide to show your students a video clip of a young boy, inspiring kids near and far not to give up trying to ride a bike after his own new-found success with shedding training wheels. You might ask kids to share ideas for what makes his speech so convincing. As you do this work, you are again inviting your students to study a mentor example to make plans for their own work. “He climbed up high to talk!” some kids might say. “He was shouting out loud and he used his body, like this...” others might offer, mimicking the boy’s authoritative pointing. You’ll help your young politicians captivate their own audience, using a

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

8

long pointer to share the parts of their projects, reading parts of their writing and speaking freely about their ideas and opinions to convince others to help in this larger cause.

You'll also teach partners to work together, rehearsing and rereading their pieces to find parts to fix up—editing punctuation, changing spelling to make words sound right, or adding more detail to show their big feelings. You can have writers self-assess again and decide if they are meeting their goals, and/or if they need to revise and set new goals.

You will want to note the standards for the production and distribution of writing. As mentioned in previous units, students are expected “with guidance and support from adults” to “respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed” (CCSS W K.5), and also “to explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers” (W K.6). This means you will want to continue to have your students working with peers to revise and edit pieces, even as they experience using various media to create and publish their work.

You might create some fanfare around this writing celebration; have students stand on soapboxes around the gymnasium or schoolyard or up on stage in the school auditorium, to share their projects with others. Perhaps you'll invite other classes to the celebration, or ask parents and schoolmates to move from one soapbox to the next, in a share fair of sorts, serving as a traveling audience and listening intently to the words of each speaker. You might choose to sound record these presentations and post them to a classroom blog, or on the school website so that students' opinions reach larger audiences. In any case, you'll celebrate the persuasive writing your students have worked on across the unit, reminding them of the larger purpose—sharing opinions and convincing others to make change.

Spelling and Language Conventions

Language Conventions

By this time of the year most of your students have secured many of the concepts of print: writing left to right, understanding the concept of words, putting spaces between words most of the time, and recognizing and writing uppercase and lowercase letters. This understanding of print should have helped them to take on more of the standard English language conventions. You will want to end the year focusing on learning to capitalize the pronoun ‘I’ and the first letter in a sentence (CCSS L K.2a) and beginning to teach the use of end marks, an end-of-year Common Core expectation for first grade. It is important that students in kindergarten learn what a sentence is and are able to recognize and name end punctuation (L K.2b). Therefore, you will want to teach students how to listen as they reread their writing, putting an end mark where they hear their voice slow or stop, and then to use a capital letter for the start of the next sentence. Children often find it easier to do this work once a page is completed as part of the editing process, rereading, putting in a period and then rereading to check that it sounds right.

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

9

Recording a Letter (or Letters) for Each Sound

Your students are recording more letters for each word than they did in the past, and that is because you have strengthened their phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondence. You are probably seeing students record letters that are not always accurate, often approximating medial sounds, as vowels are challenging for children because the sounds are very similar and difficult to discriminate. You will probably continue demonstrating the strategy of saying a word slowly, sliding your finger to listen for the first sound, then rereading, saying the word and sliding your finger again to hear the next sound. The key will be to show them how to listen for the very next sound which means having to reread and really monitor their spelling, checking and fixing up a word sometimes as it is written. We at the RWP suggesting bringing the tools you use during word study to these lessons and make them available for students to use. This may mean that they have alphabet charts or other charts from word study such as vowel charts at their seats so they can refer to them when recording letters for sounds that they are still learning. In your demonstrations make sure to show how you really listen carefully to those medial sounds and think about which letter makes that sound. This will help them see how to problem-solve words using all they know, so that they record a letter or letters for most consonant and short vowel sounds (CCSS L K.2c) and their letter-sound correspondence begins to be more accurate (L K.2d). Your spellers who know spelling patterns such as short vowel rhymes (at, an, ap, ot, op), digraphs, and blends will be spelling in parts rather than sound by sound as this will help them write words faster.

In your conferring and small group sessions, you will spend time coaching writers while they spell their words. Use lean prompts, avoiding doing too much of the work for the students. While you may, at times, demonstrate in conferences and small groups how to say a word and listen for the sounds, remember to have the students practice saying the words to themselves. Remember that in order for them to become spellers who record a letter or letters for each sound they hear, they need to be able to isolate and segment *sounds* in words. This means some writers will need a great deal of instruction and coaching on hearing the smallest units of sound, phonemes, before they can attach those sounds to print, which can then be recorded. You might warm-up with some phonemic awareness activities and then move to using this knowledge as they write letters on the pages of their books.

Editing

There are many more aspects of writing in this RWP unit that your students need to attend to as they compose and construct the text. In terms of construction, they are attending to spelling, spacing, letter formation, capitalization, and beginning to use end punctuation all with the goal of making it easy for a reader to read. Continue to demonstrate and coach students to reread as they write so they can check that everything looks right (and sounds right and makes sense) as they write. This way they won't have as much editing to do when they want to publish the piece. Teach children to stop when they realize something isn't quite right, cross it out, and fix it, possibly trying a word a few different ways. These strategies of monitoring and self-correcting

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Six - Persuasive Writing

10

parallel the work you are doing with them in reading. It is important that they transfer these skills from one context to another. Also, by urging them to practice this editing continuously, you are helping them develop good habits and a stronger writing process. You can teach partnerships to reread together, each pointing under the words as they check them and fix them up. A good time to do this is during the mid-workshop interruption as it gets children in the habit of checking their writing *while* writing.

Do not duplicate. For copies, visit our website:
readingandwritingproject.com

DRAFT
2012-2013 ©